

yif men wene nat that hope ne preyeris ne han no strengthes, by the necessitee of thinges to comen yreceived, what thing is ther thanne by whiche we mowen ben conjoined and clyven to thilke soverain prince of thinges? for which it bihoveth, by necessitee, that the linage of mankinde, as thou songe a litel herbiforn, be departed and unjoined from his welle, and failen of his biginninge, that is to seyn, God.

Metre III.

Quenam discors federa rerum.

**W**HAT discordable cause hath torent & unjoined the bindinge, or the alliaunce, of thinges, that is to seyn, the conjuncion of God & man? Whiche God hath established so greet bataile bitwixen thise two soothfast or verray thinges, that is to seyn, bitwixen the purviaunce of God and free wil, that they ben singuler & devyded, ne that they ne wolen nat be medeled ne coupled togidere? But ther nis no discord to the verray thinges, but they clyven, certein, alwey to hemself. But the thought of man, confounded and overthrowen by the dirkmembris of the body, ne may nat, by fyr of his derked looking, that is to seyn, by the vigour of his insighte, whyl the soule is in the body, knowe the thinn subtil knittings of thinges. But wherfore enchaufeth it so, by so greet love, to finden thilke notes of sooth ycovered; that is to seyn, wherfore enchaufeth the thocht of man by so greet desyr to knowen thilke notificacions that ben yhid under the covertores of sooth? What it aught thilke thing that it, anguissous, desireth to knowe? As who seith, nay; for no man travailleth for to witen thinges that he wot. And therfore the texte seith thus: but who travailleth to witen thinges yknowe? And yif that he ne knoweth hem nat, what seketh thilke blinde thocht? What is he that desireth any thing of which he wot right naught? As who seith, who so desireth any thing, nedes, somewhat he knoweth of it; or elles, he ne coude nat desire it. Or who may folwen thinges that ne ben nat ywist? And thogh that he seke tho thinges, wher shal he finde hem? What wight, that is al unconninge and ignoraunt, may knowen the forme that is yfounde? But whan the soule biholdeth & seeth the heye thocht, that is to seyn, God, than knoweth it to gidere the somme and the singularitees, that is to seyn, the principles and everich by himself.

**B**UT now, whyl the soule is hid in the cloude and in the derkenesse of the membres of the body, it ne hath nat al foryeten itself, but it withholdeth the

somme of thinges, & leseth the singularitees. Thanne, whoso that seeketh soothnesse, he nis in neither nother habite; for he noot nat al, ne he ne hath nat al foryeten; but yit him remembreth the somme of thinges that he withholdeth, & axeth conseil, and retreth deepliche thinges yseyn biforn, that is to seyn, the grete somme in his minde: so that he mowe adden the parties that he hath foryeten to thilke that he hath withholden.

Prose IV.

Cum illa: Vetis, inquit, hec est.

**W**HANNE seide she: this is, quod she, the olde question of the purviaunce of God; and Marcus Tullius, whan he devyded the divynacions, that is to seyn, in his book that he wroot of divynacions, hemotede gretly this questioun; and thou thyself has ysought it mochel, & outrely, and longe; but yit ne hath it nat ben determined ne ysped fermely and diligently of any of yow. And the cause of this derkenesse and of this difficultee is, for that the moevinge of the resoun of mankinde ne may nat moeven to (that is to seyn, applyen or joinen to) the simplicitee of the devyne prescience; the whiche simplicitee of the devyne prescience, yif that men mighten thinken it in any maner, that is to seyn, that yif men mighten thinken & comprehend the thinges as God seeth hem, thanne ne sholde ther dwellen outrely no doute: the whiche resoun & cause of difficultee I shal assaye at the laste to shewe and to speden, whan I have first yspended & answered to the resouns by which thou art ymoeved. For I axe why thou weneest that thilke resoun of hem that assolien this questioun ne ben nat speedful ynough ne sufficient: the whiche solucion, or the whiche resoun, for that it demeth that the prescience nis nat cause of necessitee to thinges to comen, than ne weneest nat that freedom of wil be destorbed or ylet by prescience. For ne drawestow nat arguments from elleswhere of the necessitee of thinges to comen (as who seith, any other wey than thus) but that thilke thinges that the prescience wot biforn ne mowen nat unbityde? That is to seyn, that they moten bityde. But thanne, yif that prescience ne putteth no necessitee to thinges to comen, as thou thyself hast confessed it & biknowen a litel herbiforn, what cause or what is it (as who seith, ther may no cause be) by which that the endes voluntarie of thinges mighten be constrained

to certein bitydinge? for by grace of possibility, so that thou mowe the betere understonde this that folweth, I pose, per impossibile, that ther be no prescience. Thanne axe I, quod she, in as mochel as apertieneth to that, sholden thanne thinges that comen of free wil ben constrained to bityden by necessitee? Boece. Nay, quod I.

**W**HANNE ayeinward, quod she, I suppose that ther be prescience, but that it ne putteth no necessitee to thinges; thanne trowe I, that thilke selve freedom of wil shal dwellen al hool and absolut & unbounden. But thou wolt seyn that, albeit so that prescience nis nat cause of the necessitee of bitydinge to thinges to comen, algates yit it is a signe that the thinges ben to bityden by necessitee. By this manere thanne, althogh the prescience ne hadde never yben, yit algate or at the leeste weye it is certein thing, that the endes and bitydinges of thinges to comen sholden ben necessarie. For every signe sheweth and signifyeth only what the thing is, but it ne maketh nat the thing that it signifyeth, for which it bihoveth first to shewen, that nothing ne bitydeth that it ne bitydeth by necessitee, so that it may appere that the prescience is signe of this necessitee; or elles, yif ther nere no necessitee, certes, thilke prescience ne mighte nat be signe of thing that nis nat. But certes, it is now certein that the proeve of this, ysustened by stidfast resoun, ne shal nat ben lad ne proeved by signes ne by arguments ytaken fro withoute, but by causes covenable and necessarie. But thou mayst seyn, how may it be that the thinges ne bityden nat that ben ypurveyed to comen? But, certes, right as we trowen that the thinges which that the purviaunce wot biforn to comen ne ben nat to bityden; but that ne sholden we nat demen; but rather, althogh that they shal bityden, yit ne have they no necessitee of hir kinde to bityden. And this maystow lightly aperceiven by this that I shal seyn. For we seen many thinges whan they ben don biforn oure eyen, right as men seen the cartere workmen in the torninge or atempringe or adressing of hise cartes or charietes. And by this manere (as who seith, maystow understonde) of alle othere workmen. Is ther thanne any necessitee, as who seith, in oure looking, that constraineth or compelleth any of thilke thinges to ben don so?

Boece.

**W**HANNE, quod I; for in ydel and in veyn were al the effect of craft, yif that alle thinges weren moeved by constraininge; that is to seyn, by constraininge of oure eyen or of oure sight.

Philosophie.

**W**HANNE thinges thanne, quod she, that whan men doon hem, ne han no necessitee that men doon hem, eek tho same thinges, first or they ben doon, they ben to comen withoute necessitee, for why ther ben somme thinges to bityden, of which the endes & the bitydinges of hem ben absolut and quit of alle necessitee. For certes, I ne trowe nat that any man wolde seyn this: that tho thinges that men doon now, that they ne weren to bityden first or they weren ydoon; & thilke same thinges, althogh that men had ywist hem biforn, yit they han free bitydinges. For right as science of thinges present ne bringeth in no necessitee to thinges that men doon, right so the prescience of thinges to comen ne bringeth in no necessitee to thinges to bityden. But thou mayst seyn, that of thilke same it is ydouted, as whether that of thilke thinges that ne han non issues & bitydinges necessarie, yif therof may ben any prescience; for certes, they semen to discorden. For thou weneest that, yif that thinges ben yseyn biforn, that necessitee folweth hem; and yif necessitee failleth hem, they ne mighten nat ben wist biforn, & that nothing ne may ben comprehended by science but certein; and yif tho thinges that ne han no certein bitydinges ben purveyed as certein, it sholde ben dirknesse of opinioun, nat soothfastnesse of science. And thou weneest that it be diverse fro the hoolnesse of science that any man sholde deme a thing to ben otherweys thanne it is itself. And the cause of this erreure is, that of alle the thinges that every wight hath yknowe, they wenen that tho thinges been yknowe also only by the strengthe & by the nature of the thinges that ben ywist or yknowe; & it is al the contrarie. For al that ever is yknowe, it is rather comprehended and knowen, nat after his strengthe and his nature, but after the facultee, that is to seyn, the power and the nature, of hem that knowen. And, for that this thing shal mowen shewen by a short ensaumple: the same roundnesse of a body, otherweys the sighte of the eye knoweth it, & otherweys the touching. The lookinge by castinge of his bemes, waiteth and seeth from afer al the body togidere, withoute moevinge of itself; but the touching clyveth & conjoineth to the rounde body, & moeveth aboute the enviringe, and comprehendeth by parties the roundnesse. And the man himself, otherweys wit biholdeth him, and otherweys imaginacioun, & otherweys resoun, & otherweys intelligence. For the wit comprehendeth withoute forth the figure of the body of the man that is established in the matere subject; but the imaginacioun comprehendeth only the figure withoute